

Congressman Bright Challenges Small Business Administration to be More Responsive to Second District

WASHINGTON, DC – Yesterday, Congressman Bobby Bright participated in a Small Business Committee hearing on “Oversight of the Small Business Administration (SBA) and its Programs.” Bright used his time to question SBA Administrator Karen Mills on the SBA’s poor handling of a contract on which Dynalantic, a company with an office in Ozark, submitted a bid. Dynalantic appealed the contract, which was awarded to a Pennsylvania company that may not qualify for small business set-aside contracts, but has yet to receive a final answer from the SBA on the status of the appeal despite a judge ordering SBA to review the contract. Dynalantic’s situation was the subject of a recent article in the Dothan Eagle.

You can view Congressman Bright’s testimony on the House Small Business Committee’s Youtube Channel. After hearing the testimony, Administrator Mills apologized for the SBA’s actions and committed to work with Congressman Bright to see this issue resolved in a timely fashion.

Congressman Bright’s prepared testimony is below:

“Thank you Chairwoman Velazquez and thank you Administrator Mills for being with us here today. Like every member of this committee, I’m a strong supporter of America’s small businesses and I believe Congress and the SBA should do everything in their power to support business across the nation. Hearings like this provide us with an opportunity to evaluate how that process is working, ask questions, and share any concerns we may have. And I’m disappointed to have to say this, but I have serious concerns about the SBA’s ability to carry out some of its most basic responsibilities.

“Far too often, I hear complaints from small businesses in my district that are having difficulty working with the SBA. When the situation calls for it, my office has made efforts to help these businesses navigate the red tape that individuals encounter any time they deal with the federal government. Most of the time, we find ourselves sharing the frustration felt by my constituents. This is particularly troubling because the SBA, like every other agency, has a Congressional Affairs staff that helps answer Member inquiries. If a Member can’t get the attention of the SBA, I can only imagine how hard it is for an average business owner to get answers.

“While this has been my experience on a number of complaints that have been shared with my office, let me remind you of a specific case that has concerned me — one that I brought to your attention last time we spoke. Last year, the Defense Department awarded a contract to build Mi-17 helicopter simulators to a business in Pennsylvania. In November 2009, a company in my district filed a protest that the company that won the bid didn’t qualify under SBA guidelines. I wrote you a month later asking that the SBA conduct a “fair and rigorous review” of the protest. Unfortunately, that didn’t happen. SBA ruled that this company met SBA requirements in February of this year but when it was sent back your own Office of Hearings and Appeals in May, the judge in the case found numerous errors in the determination. He wrote a scathing report and remanded the decision back to SBA to do it over. So, nearly nine months later, we find ourselves back at square one.

“Now I know the judge in this case can’t make the determination himself, nor do I want him to try. What I do expect, however, is that the SBA should be able to conduct a “fair and rigorous review” and get it done in a timely fashion. Instead, my letters on this issue have been returned with non-answers and my staff is given the run-around when they ask for information. What should have been done months ago remains in SBA limbo with no assurances from anybody that this will be done soon.

“Let me be clear, I can accept it when businesses in my district don’t win a contract. It happens and that’s ok. What I cannot accept is a series of errors that potentially allow a business to win a contract that they are ineligible to receive. I say potentially because the sad fact is — we’re still waiting on SBA to settle the matter.

“So Chairwoman Velazquez and Administrator Mills, I’m sorry to have spent my time focusing on such a specific issue, but I remain concerned about the case and I believe it’s my responsibility to raise the issue in whatever venue necessary so we can get this right. So, Administrator Mills —

have one question for you: Can I get your commitment today to direct your folks to take this issue more seriously and bring it to resolution?"